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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6835  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000566

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/16/2019

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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE SENIOR MINISTER HIGHLIGHTS IMPLICATIONS  
TO BURMESE IF AUNG SAN SUU KYI IS CONVICTED

Classified By: CDA Daniel Shields for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Singapore Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong pointed out to Burma Senior General Than Shwe during a June 8-11 visit to Burma that there would be negative foreign policy implications should Burma convict Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK), according to a Singapore MFA briefing. Goh, noting his "personal relationship" with Than, said he hoped to use his visit to impress upon Burma's leadership the seriousness with which the outside world views the ASSK trial. Goh told Than that Singapore hoped Burma's 2010 elections would be fair, transparent and inclusive. He added that Singapore hoped the Burmese government would allow all political parties to participate in the election and that ASSK would be allowed to lead her party during the elections. Goh also met with, and was unimpressed by, the Regional Commanders of Rangoon, Mandalay and Taunggyi. During a visit to the Irrawaddy Delta, Goh urged that Burma allow the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) to continue to conduct post-Nargis humanitarian relief efforts. End Summary.

No Bad News Allowed  
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¶2. (C) Singapore speculates that Burma's leaders may sometimes be unaware of international criticism of Burma, as lower ranking officials may water down the presentation of negative news so as to avoid upsetting Burma's leadership, MFA Southeast Asia Deputy Director Foo Chi Hsia told Poloff and several Western diplomats in a June 16 briefing on Goh's visit to Burma. (Note: Post requested a readout from MFA Second Permanent Secretary Bilahari Kausikan, who asked that Post get the readout from Foo, who accompanied Goh on the trip. End Note.) Goh viewed his visit to Burma as a means to open a direct line of communication with Burma's top leaders. Than Shwe and the next four highest ranking leaders of the Burmese State Peace and Development Council all attended the Goh meeting, Foo said. Goh told Than that many countries are closely watching ASSK's trial and "despite the issue being a Burmese internal matter, a conviction could have negative foreign policy implications for Burma," Foo said. Goh told Than the United States is currently reviewing its policy towards Burma, likely with an eye towards greater U.S. engagement with the regime, but an ASSK conviction could preclude a positive U.S. policy shift. Goh suggested that even if ASSK is convicted, Burma might find it advantageous to "make a gesture."

¶3. (C) Goh told Than Singapore hopes that Burma's 2010 elections will be fair, transparent and inclusive. Goh said that regardless of the result of ASSK's trial, Singapore

hopes the Burmese government will allow ASSK to lead her party during the elections and that all political parties will be allowed to participate in the process.

¶4. (C) Than reacted fairly well to Goh's frank statements, Foo said. Than listened intently and "did not get up and walk out," she said. Than assured Goh that the 2010 elections would be free and fair. He labeled ASSK as "obstructionist" and blamed her for the international sanctions against Burma. He said that if ASSK called for the international community to lift sanctions, Burma's leadership might be willing to engage in discussions with her. Goh repeated for Than the message ASSK gave to Singapore's Ambassador to Burma in which she called for national reconciliation, Foo said.

¶5. (C) Than said Burma would continue with its plan to carry out the Seven-Step Roadmap. Goh suggested that an eighth step be added to rescind the requirement that one quarter of the parliament be represented by the military. Than replied that once elected, the parliament would have the power to enact such changes if it deemed them necessary.

Don't Worry, the Swimmer was Disturbed, but Probably Not CIA  
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¶6. (C) Foo said Goh also took the opportunity to suggest to Than that the American who swam to ASSK's house was likely just a disturbed individual and not part of any CIA plot, as had been rumored in the Burmese press.

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A New Generation of Uninspiring Leaders  
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¶7. (C) In an effort to court Burma's next (potential) generation of leaders, Goh sought out and received meetings with the Regional Military Commanders of Rangoon, Mandalay and Taunggyi, Foo said. The Commanders were an unimpressive group, focused only on "maintaining peace and security," Foo said. The commanders had almost no experience with the world outside Burma (although one had previously traveled to the United States) or life outside the Burmese military, Foo lamented.

Pitch for TCG  
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¶8. (C) Goh took the opportunity, at the commemoration of a Singapore-funded hospital in the Irrawaddy Delta, to publicly highlight the importance of Tripartite Core Group's (TCG) work in providing post-Nargis humanitarian relief to Burma and to call for a continuation of the TCG's humanitarian effort there.

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